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COMMUNION AND VISIBLE UNITY, THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS.

Q. 1. For what should the disciples of Christ now most earnestly pray?

A. For the supply of their greatest wants, *Communion and Visible Unity*.

Q. 2. Is the opinion that they are deficient in these things peculiar to yourself?

A. Certainly not:—As to the want of *Communion*—universally, where is a spiritual and enlightened saint who is not conscious of it? And the lack of *visible unity* has long been the jeer of the Roman Catholic and the taunt of the Deist and Infidel.—Let such as would question the correctness of this opinion consider the present number of sects and parties in religion, and be silent.

Q. 3. Is “the Unity of the Church” and her “visible unity” one and the same thing?

A. No. The unity of the Church, and the *visible* unity of the Church, ought to be distinguished, the one from the other, as two very different things.—The first stands related to the second, as, in a tree, the root, with its sap, is related to the leaves and fruit. *Unity* in nature and privilege the Church HAS, for, according to the purpose, counsel and estimate of the Father, it is already, through the Spirit, “one in the Son.” Now the knowledge of this real and eternal unity, which the Saints *already* possess, through the Spirit, *in** Christ, leads them, when it is believed, into communion or fellowship one with another. And the result of their communion OUGHT TO BE unity of testimony or *visible unity*; [just as Jesus and

* Note.—It is through this union of the church *in* Christ, that each believer, as an individual, knows his union *with* Christ.) ?

the Father are one in testimony through their fellowship in one nature and one glory.] ~~Let us now turn to the~~

Q. 4. Explain what you mean by "unity," "communion," and "visible unity."

A. *Unity* represents a more simple idea than the word communion. If I want to say of any thing that "there is no division or separation within it," I use the word *unity*; whether the thing, of which I am speaking, is by nature (in itself) one, or is made up of many parts so completely united together as to form but one whole. But if I want to say of two or more things, or two or more parts of any thing, that a mutual relationship exists among them, so that each respective member has common interest in each and all of the other members, I use the word *communion**. And lastly, any such result of communion as is perceptible to bystanders, I call *visible unity*. To exemplify this:—If I speak of the *unity* of the members of a man's body, I simply mean, that though the body has many members, yet that all these many members together make but one body:—but if I say, there is *communion* among the members of a man's body, I then express that there is a mutual relationship and common interest existing between the various members of the body, so that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members are honoured with it:—[and lastly, when I say the body adorns, with more abundant honor, its more feeble and less honourable members, I give an instance of its *visible unity*.]

Now the unity of the Church is its oneness before God, in Christ, through the Spirit.

* Note.—The word "communion" means "*partaking of*,"—"*joined with*, &c." It cannot therefore be applied to any thing, save in connexion with something else. Moreover, since various bands may unite things together, it is evident we can never judge of the nature, or the strength of any communion, until we know *what* and what the *nature* of that is, which is "*the means* of uniting them together." Communion, however, always involves the idea of mutual relationship and common interest between the things of which it is said,—and of sympathy, so far at least as that which unites together admits of it.

Communion,* when applied to men as Christians, means that *in and from this union* they have a mutual interest and reciprocal responsibility, &c. in one another.

And visible unity, when said of any number of Believers, just means that their character and conduct make it manifest to those around, that no division exists among them. I would add that, as, in order rightly to estimate the character of the fellowship existing among the members of the body, in the illustrations given above, we need to know the nature of the human body, the power of natural life, and the sensibility of health: so, if we would estimate aright what, and what the character of the fellowship existing among the Saints is,—what its power,—what its blessedness,—what its responsibility? we need to understand *what is the nature of the Heavenly Bride and what is the power of the Life of the Holy Ghost in the Church*. For that which is the bond of the communion of Saints is nothing short of the Lord the Spirit. The Church is the place of His revelation, abode, and operations: there He manifests to the faith of the Saints, the glory of the Father as seen in Jesus—

* Note.—Communion of saints is the fellowship of the children of God in the Spirit, and by the truth as it is in Jesus. And no combination is the communion of saints which is not *“the proper result of the truth as it is in Jesus, upon those who have the fellowship of the Spirit.”* For this reason, we cannot recognize as the communion of saints (i), “the fellowship of ignorance” in the church of Rome, “the fellowship of spiritual wickedness” in any worldly, democratic or infidel faction: nor (ii), the fellowship of any of the people of GOD with the men of this world; as with the merchants of the earth for commercial advantages; with the philanthropic, for benevolent purposes; or with professed Socinians and worldlings, for the sake of *“being useful:”* nor (iii), the association of those accidentally interested in sending abroad Bibles, Missionaries, &c. [these services are holy when done by Saints, *as such*, but not otherwise]: nor (iv), the combination, even of Disciples, *if* upon self-devised principles of worldliness, exclusive sectarianism, isolated portions of truth, or in the name of any man. None of these fellowships is the communion of saints, for of which of them can it be said, *This is the proper result of the truth as it is in Jesus:—to this the Holy Ghost has led, on the motives and with the ends peculiar to Himself: Here is a gathering open to all God’s children, separate unto God from the present evil world.*

whilst His new creation in them is the power of their receiving and reflecting that which Himself thus presents to them.

Q. 5. Is there any passage of Scripture which pre-eminently sets forth this communion and visible unity as the duty of the Saints?

A. Yes. The prayer of our Lord in the xviith of St. John. Three times Jesus here prayed for oneness among His disciples, as the object of His especial desire, and on each occasion He explained, that what He wanted was a visible unity proceeding from such a fellowship as He had with the Father.

First,—Looking at them (v. 11. 15) as in the midst of an evil world, which was to be the place of their testimony, He prays

“Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me *that they may be one*—AS WE ARE....I pray, not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

Secondly,—Regarding them (v. 21) as seen in GOD, the word of Whose truth was the power of their sanctification, He asks

“*That they ALL may be one ; AS THOU FATHER ART IN ME AND I IN THEE that they also may be one IN US :* that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.

And Thirdly, — Considering them (v. 22) as those to whom, as sons of the same Father (His own friends) He would open all the riches of that Father's love, He adds, “And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them *that they may be one EVEN AS WE ARE ONE*, I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.

Q. 6. Was not our Lord here praying for that spiritual mystic union which, though invisible, unites His members in one?—Surely such is the union between Himself and the Father.

A. Do not confound *unity* and *visible* unity together :—Jesus said, not only “One, as we are one,” but also

“that the world may know,” &c. Now, the union in nature and glory of the Father and the Son is *in itself* to man invisible, but it is seen resulting in testimony. For the Scriptures shew us that the unity of testimony between the Father and the Son is the result of their fellowship in one nature and in one glory. And besides this, the context of this 17th ch. proves beyond a question, that the oneness prayed for in it is *only* that which is palpable and outward. Observe, I do not say that there is no mystic essential invisible union among the disciples,—or that this is not to them of far the most importance,—or that this was not at the time *present* before the mind of Jesus :—for I should then say that which I do not believe. But what I do say is that, in this chapter, it is exclusively outward and palpable oneness which is presented to us as having in that hour been *the desire* and *prayer* of Jesus for His disciples.—This is plain to the most careless reader. He does not pray for the uniting band of the Divine nature and its privileges to be conferred upon His disciples—How should He? His whole mind had assumed *that*. If *that* had been uncertain, how could He have said to them.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid—Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you—As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you :—Ye have not chosen me ; but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain—that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name He may give it you.—Ye are not of the world ; but I have chosen you out of the world,” &c. &c.

If that had been uncertain, how could He have said of them

“whom Thou Father gavest me out of the world : Thine they were, and thou gavest them me—I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine and I am glorified in them,—the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even

as I am not of the world.—And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them," &c.

Observe, He was not praying for the world (v. 9), nor that some might be drawn to Him out of the world, but He was praying for those in whom His eye saw the germ of eternal life ready to unfold itself in glory. He handled therefore that only which such would need, in order to have among themselves an unity in testimony corresponding to the unity in testimony between Himself and His Father. This contained three things ; (i), to be kept from the evil ; (ii), to be sanctified by the word of truth unto God ; (iii), to know that this "word of truth" teaches them of the Love and glory given in Christ.

Q. 6. Can you illustrate from other parts of the New Testament, the position you seem to have taken, that the unity, communion and unity in testimony of the Father and the Son are each of them a pattern for believers ?

A. I believe I can do more and prove that the unity, communion and visible unity of the Father and the Son, are, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Church, its own unity, communion and visible unity ; for the Church's call is not to an independant or separate portion, but to a participation of what is *in* Jesus.

Jesus promised that when He was gone to the Father, the Lord the Spirit should come and take up His abode in the church : through whose abiding presence, testifying not of Himself but of Jesus, the people of God should be gathered out of the world, "for He died that He might gather together in one, the children of GOD that were scattered abroad." This endowment of the Spirit, as opened to us by the Lord (John xiv. xv. xvi), is the new thing which the resurrection and ascension of Jesus brought into light and being. For the promise, "He dwelleth *with* you and shall be *in* you," has been accomplished : The Holy Ghost has taken up His residence in the church, making it the temple of GOD (1 Cor. iii. 10, 16, 17 ; 2 Cor. vi. 16 ; Eph. ii. 20 ; 1 Pet. ii. 5). And we all, as living stones, parts of that temple, know, not only the life we have derived from Him, but His own Personal presence and agency in us (1 Cor. vi. 19).

Moreover we have received out of His fulness (on whom as the chief corner-stone we rest) grace for grace [that is for every grace in Jesus we have received one to correspond to it]. For the epistles describe the Saints as, through the Spirit, being already in the resurrection-life and glory of Jesus; and as being thus all equally and alike involved (wrapped up together) in the fellowship of *one* common nature and *one* common privilege, and all called to *one* common occupation of testimony (whether that testimony be of character or of works) through fellowship with the Father and the Son. In proof of this, be it observed, that so far as each of the three points under consideration is concerned, the same things which are said of Jesus are said of the church.

First, As to the identity of the church's unity with that of the Father and the Son:—Jesus and the Father are *one* first in nature, so we all are “made partakers of the *Divine Nature*” (2 Pet. i. 4), each of us being “one Spirit with the Lord” (1 Cor. vi. 17); for as “both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, He was not ashamed to call us brethren” (Heb. ii. 11). They are one, secondly, in power, in blessedness, and in glory: now as to power, it is written of *us*, “He is the Head over all things *to the Church*” (Eph. i. 22), “so that *all* things are ours, the world, life, death, things present or things to come, all are ours” (1 Cor. iii. 22): for as it was said to Him, “Sit Thou at my right hand,” so of us it is written, As He *is* so are we (1 John iv. 17); for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (i. 3). Again, as to blessing:—Being raised up in Him, we, who were dead in trespasses and sins, being quickened together with Him, have been made to sit together in Heavenly places, *blessed* with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Him (Eph. i. & ii). And as to glory:—Now are we the sons of God, and if sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17); now receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb. xii. 28); and an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us (1 Pet. i. 4). And though it doth not

et appear what we shall be, we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2). "For He comes to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10).

Secondly, As to the identity of the communion of Saints with that of the Father and the Son :—Observe how these passages all present the fellowship of the Saints as being one with the Father and the Son ; as it is plainly written, That they may be one in us (John xvii. 21). And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 3).

Thirdly, As to the identity of the unity in testimony of the church and that of Jesus and the Father :—Jesus and the Father are one in spirit, mind* and heart, in character, in object and purpose ; so of us it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His :—as many as are led by the Spirit they are Sons of God ; and we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. ii. 16) ; and into our *hearts*, God hath shined to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus (2 Cor. iv. 6) ; that the fleshy tables of our hearts should be epistles of Christ through the Spirit (iii. 3). And thus was provision made that we might be made partakers of His Holiness (Heb. xii. 10), sharers of His innate love, even to the being ready to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John iii. 16). Imitators of God (Eph. v. 1). Conformed to the Likeness of His Son (Rom. viii. 29). Changed into the same image from Glory to Glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). And all this with the object, that being led by the Spirit and constrained by the Love of Christ, none of us should live to himself ; but whether we eat,

* It cannot be too strongly pressed upon the attention of the Saints that sympathy of affection, like-mindedness, and fellowship of feeling are *not* the constituent elements of their communion as Saints, but *results* from it. Our communion is by the Holy Ghost and in the truth as it is in Jesus—this alone can guard us from despair in the midst of failure, and from our own *caprice* in the midst of the weakness of those around. May we so use this as to be all made to desire the same objects, think the same thoughts, and speak the same things.

or whether we drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God (Rom. xiv. 7—9; 1 Cor. x. 31; 2 Cor. v. 15; Col. iii. 17, &c.); in all things fellow-workers with God (1 Cor. iii. 9).

Thus are we unknown and hated by the world even as He was (1 John iii. 13; xv. 18; xvi. 33); though the light of it (Matt. v. 14); and as it was in His obedience *unto* death that our life was first found (John xii. 24); so every fresh step in the knowledge of the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings is, *by being made conformable unto His death* (Phil. iii. 10). Using our death in Him, as the power of daily escape from the influence of the world, the flesh and the Devil (Gal. ii. 20; Phil. ii. 5, 8; Heb. xii. 1—4; 1 Pet. iv. 1). In a word, all the disciples being alike, by their participation in the Life of the Spirit, co-partners in the glory of Jesus in Heaven (the common stock of their company) they should, in heart and mind, in motive, object and purpose be “*ONE, as the Father and the Son are one**.”

Q. 7. What do you imagine was the Lord's *object* in this “unity and communion?”

A. He states it Himself, “*that the world may believe,*” “*that the world may know,*” &c.

Q. 8. Do you insist then that the Disciples ought to be so outwardly and *visibly* united, as that their unity should obtrude itself on the World's notice?

A. Jesus says so: He prays for their unity, “*that the world may believe,*” “*that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.*” Elsewhere also (cxiii. 35) He says, “By this shall *all* men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love *one* to another.”

Q. 9. Is this the case with the Church of God in England?

* Note.—All the figures by which the Spirit has illustrated the union between Christ and the Church, point out, not only the reality of the union between each believer and Jesus, but also, especially, the union of the believers one with another in Him.—The shepherd and his flock—the tree and its branches—the body and its members—the husband and the wife—the foundation and the building.

A. Alas ! It is not.—It is every where divided into sects. Besides the parties whose tenets deny the faith altogether, there are not less than twenty divisions in the professing Church in this land.

Q. 10. If outward and visible unity, as the result of the fellowship of the Spirit, was our Lord's desire for His disciples, how do the believers, in these sects, fulfil that desire ?

A. They do not and they cannot accomplish it at all.—*In their state of division into Sects* the world can see no unity. For if all the members of each of these Sects had spiritual union in the life of Christ, one with another, and also with all in the other Sects ; still there would be no *such avowal of communion as the world* could take notice of. In their state of *Division into Sects* the world could not see unity. But alas ! the fact is, that of the many found in each Sect, it is only a few who have even the inward consciousness of being members one of another (Eph. iv. 25) through the all-pervading life of Christ,—that they are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another (Rom. xii. 5); and manifest fellowship with any beyond their own sect is very very rare. Of how few can it be said “they seek not their own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's, looking every man after his brother's wealth, and seeking to please every man his neighbour for his good to edification (Phil. ii. 21 ; 1 Cor. x. 24 ; Rom. xv. 2). In Acts ii. 44 ; iv. 34 ; Rom. xv. 26 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 1 ; 2 Cor. ix, we have examples of the sort of exhibition of unity Jesus desired ; each of which was produced and sustained *by the faith of Christ in risen life*, the dispenser of the Spirit. Our present state is a dishonour to Jesus, and a shame to ourselves.

Q. 11. What do you mean by a Sect ? *

* Note.—As to the present state of God's people, observe three things.

- I. The disciples have now no union as *disciples*. — *faux*
- II. Their union with the Sects is division amongst themselves. For *non*
- III. It is upon other and different grounds than that of participation by the Spirit in the heavenly calling.

Where the disciples are united simply as *disciples* in the

attachant à une secte ou à une communion, sans que la relation de l'union avec l'Église universelle — que la relation de l'union avec l'Église universelle (c'est-à-dire avec la secte, dans les sens ordinaires de ces termes)

A. A Sect is an association of individuals which professes to have Church Communion, when its bonds of union are more rigid or latitudinarian, than those laid down in the word. God's design was, that His people should be delivered from this present evil world, by their fellowship one with another in the Spirit and the heavenly glory which the Father gave to Jesus. When the Spirit of the world or of self gets in, men are gathered together, but upon other principles than those laid down for the Church.—Such an union is a Sect.—A Sect may contain some of the Faithful; but it is no congregation of them *as such*; whether its peculiarity be a sanction of evil, from which the Church should be delivered, or a hindrance of truth in which she should be united.

*by their
fellowship
with Christ*

Q. 12. Would the union of all these Sects accomplish the Lord's object?

A. It certainly would not,—for there would be no moral character or power in it. Each Sect has interests, private and peculiar to itself, hostile and inimical to those of all the rest. This is worldliness; and a combination of worldliness could not produce unity in the Spirit or its fruits.

Q. 13. What would accomplish this object then?

A. There has been but little communion, and no

enlarged love of the heart and mind of Christ, it can be said with truth, "He that is not of our communion, shall undoubtedly perish everlastingly," for to be separate from them is to be separate from Christ: concerning which Sect can this be averred? It can be said of none—and why? but because it requires something more to connect you with a Sect, than it does to connect you with Christ and the household of Faith: e.g. if in order to get full access to the members of Christ in the establishment, I join it; the very act cuts me off from the same free communion with my fellow-members in the body of Independents, and *vice versa*—and so is it with all of them—to be joined to one Sect, is to be separate from the Brethren in the rest. Each Sect adds a different *something*; hence union with the Sects is division amongst the Saints. Is there one of these, continued fellowship with which is not understood by all the rest to be disqualification for membership with itself? Is there one with which I can join hand and heart, and still remain simply a Christian, committed to nothing but to obedience to the Spirit and to the heavenly calling? — *Yes.*

As to this

que vous appelez secte représente une diversité dans la manière de savoir tel ou tel point particulier des enseignements bibliques. Cette diversité, Dieu la permet. Elle est nécessaire à la sainteté; — car sans elle, il n'y a pas de sainteté. Elle est nécessaire à la sainteté. Elle est nécessaire à la sainteté.

visible unity; because, having neglected the truth of the written word—which is the power of sanctification (John xvii)—the Disciples have sunk into the motives, objects, and ways, of their own hearts and minds. And the dominion of self and the world has grieved the Spirit. But if the Holy Ghost were unrestrainedly present (as Lord and Head of many minds and hearts among us), there, there would be communion; there, there would be visible unity: manifest unity there must be there, for His motives are single, His objects and purposes, means and ways, are single and pure: and as, if many were in heart and mind made subject to the Heavenly calling *by such an one*, there, unity must be manifest; so this very state is in itself communion. Let us remember that the Spirit works by the Truth as it is in Jesus: Faith in the Truth as it is in Jesus is the Spirit's remedy for all evil. Let us remember also, for our comfort, that we know the one place in which He, whose power we want, is sure to be found—a place in which His power is *always* in exercise to them that are there—a place surely open to *us*.—The presence of the Lamb that was slain alive again for evermore. For all the Saints have been delivered from condemnation, death, sin, and judgment, by the death of Jesus; and they all are risen in His life, and are now ascended into Heaven in Him. Behold then the cure! a platform for union, elevated above all doubts and disputes! Glory shewn in a place in which all can see it! A Possession given which each can appropriate, and yet the whole be left free for others! And surely nothing but an evil heart of unbelief, cherishing self and the world, and so, hindering the Spirit, can prevent the uniting tendency of Faith in these things. Let each disciple cleave to Jesus as the crucified, risen and about to be openly glorified Lord; and let him purge himself from all that is of the world, the flesh or the Devil.

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CONTINUATION OF
COMMUNION AND VISIBLE UNITY, THE
DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF ALL
TRUE CHRISTIANS.

On the Present Conduct of those who admit this.

Q. 14. Describe briefly the present state of modern churches.

A. God *has* united together all His Saints, by one Spirit, in one Glory *in* Jesus. He would have this, which is their *real* Union, to be the only means of their outward Union upon earth. But none of the churches are satisfied with this. All add to or take from these terms of communion. Consequently he who recognizes that he is bound to meet his brethren upon these grounds and upon no others, can join none of the churches.

Q. 15. What is the faithful disciple to do?

A. To be obedient and make the glory given to the Church in Jesus His only ground of outward and visible union with the saints on earth.*

Q. 16. But unless all the Saints return to these grounds of communion, the evil will still remain.

A. True—the Lord's purpose in His Church would not be met unless *all* returned. Yet if we cannot make others do right and cease to do wrong, we may ourselves. This will be the best thing we can do for our own sakes and for theirs also; for example sways more than precept. The same principles of communion are open to us as were acted upon by the early Christians. Let each act upon this; for thus only can we meet the Spirit's mind and rightly serve Christ.—Henceforth let us act as though we were *one*, with each and all who have received the

* It cannot be too strongly pressed, that God requires His Saints to recognize, as the means of their Union upon earth, the same things which constitute their real Union in heaven, and these only.

Spirit of God: *one* in heaven,—*in* HIM Who was dead but is alive again for evermore. Let us deny every other bond and every other centre of outward association.

Q. 17. Had we not better remain as we are till each of us has attained, through the Spirit, full fellowship in the power of the resurrection of Jesus, being made conformable unto His death?—we are very weak.

A. No. Let us cease *to do evil* at once. Low as we are sunk, yet still we have the Spirit and a little strength: when we have used that little faithfully, more will be given. Over outward connexion with what is *evil*, we certainly have power—let us separate from it, and then persevere in seeking from the Lord, the power and teaching of His Spirit, till we gather from the glory of Jesus, as set forth in the Scriptures, the full impress of His likeness.

Q. 18. Is it then *evil* for a disciple to belong to any of the Sects?

A. The Holy Ghost calls it “carnal” and says that such walk as men; (1 Cor. iii. 1—3) “I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ....for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”

Q. 19. What then ought a faithful disciple, who may find himself connected with any of these parties, to do?

A.* To separate himself from so carnal a course—refusing henceforth to be called by any name but Christ’s, to belong to any other denomination or party, to serve any cause or promote any interests but His (Rom. xvi. 17). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Connexion with a party makes a man feel most at ease, and in love with those who are “of us” and so introduces self: he who is of no

* Separation from evil is always right, always healthful to a saint.

to church at 10.30. In evening, near 8.15. 11.15. 12.15.

renewal of spirit
sectate.

sect occupies a position in which he can equally have communion and feel love to all saints alike. Knowing no man after the flesh—yea though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth to know him no more—that is to know no man save as connected with the risen Christ, and Jesus himself, not simply as a man whose conduct had a demand upon our natural judgment and affection, but as the risen Lord, the object of the Spirit and of faith.

Q. 20. But all the Sects are not equally objectionable: do not some of them hold excellent truths, and avoid fearful evils which the others do not?

A. Quite true; yet all of them are alike guilty of being Sects, and so of rending and dividing the body of Christ.

Q. 21. But of what *use* would it be to cease to hold connexion with them in their corporate character? You say there are twenty sects already—now, if, on your plan, one Disciple of Jesus were drawn out of each of these sects to meet together, would they not necessarily form another sect, and so add to the exhibition of disunion?

A. I must make two remarks ere I reply. 1st. I never argue about the use of obeying God's word. It is not for me to judge God, but to submit to Him. 2ndly, the plan is His, not mine. To proceed:—You suppose twenty Disciples leave the sects—they need not form another sect. If they arranged a Church system for themselves, or neglected what is written, they certainly would become a sect, for in so doing (however unconsciously), they would be withdrawing from the guidance of the Spirit and from subjection to the written word. But if they met simply as disciples, in dependance upon the Holy Ghost to instruct them in the Scriptures and to give them communion of Saints, they would not be a sect at all.—Let them meet with no bond of unity but that of the Spirit, and with no interests but those of the church, as dead and risen into heaven, in JESUS, and they are not a sect.

Q. 22. But *how many* would suffice and *how* could they be organized together?

*Is not a organization it is a
system.*

A. It is written, "Where *two* or *three* are gathered together in My name,* there *am I* in the midst of them" (Mat. xviii. 20).

Q. 23. What would they do for a leader or head?

A. As disciples, they have one already. "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Mat. xxiii. 8).

Q. 24. But Jesus is not *now* on earth with the Church as then!

A. But the Holy Ghost, whom He said He would send from the Father to be "*in His stead*," is, and the word of His testimony.

Q. 25. What bond of union, however, could such a body have?

A. The same as the churches of old—"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. iv. 3).

Q. 26. Well; who is to settle the terms of communion?

A. Jesus has already done that, by His Spirit, saying,

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him. Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. xiv. 1; xv. 7).

Q. 27. Would not differences of judgment upon the points which now divide so many, still render this impossible?

A. Unity of knowledge is no pre-requisite to com-

* Observe *in My name*, the *risen* Lord's *name*. To any one who knows the force of the word *name* in Scripture, it must be evident none of the Sects meet in His name—any more than they fulfil the command not to forsake the assembling of *ourselves* (the Saints) together.

x assertion fautive

munion.—Our directions are plain, *Whereunto we have already attained to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing*, and if in any matter a man be otherwise minded (of different judgment), God will reveal even this unto him (Phil. iii. 16, 15).

Q. 28. As to the choice and ordination of *the ministry*, how would that be effected?

A. It is "Communion of Saints" which is our duty and privilege: but this does not necessarily suppose the presence of any one able to preach, or set apart thereto. From the Scriptures we learn, without any preacher, that Christ died for us and rose again. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me". Here we have the centre of union, its power and strength. Now it is *not* the meeting together to hear some one preach, *but* the meeting together to break bread and edify one another in love, which is *the appointed symbol or outward expression of this our common union in the death of Jesus, and our best means of growing in the knowledge of the power of it.* When a few disciples (two or three) meet as brethren around the Lord's table, they shew forth their subjection to Jesus, who said, "*Do this until I come.*" They shew also their communion through the Spirit one with another in Jesus, as it is written "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ—the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ. For we being many are *one bread and one body*, for we all are partakers of that one bread;" they shew also their hope in Jesus, who said, "*Do this, until I come.*"

Q. 29. But who should break the bread to them?

A. Any one. One as well as another. In Acts we read (ii. 42), "they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers;" and (v. 46) "breaking bread from house to house," (or at home). Nothing is written in any part of Scripture to raise a question as to the propriety of every disciple breaking the bread. And it is most remarkable, that in the 1st Corinthians, where we have the fullest accounts of any, of this ordinance (x. & xi),

of the mode of executing discipline (v), and of the means and mode of edification (xii. xiii. xiv.), not one word is said about any person being with them in the character of Ruler. It is even plain that there was none such present; for the blame of the disorder is cast upon the whole body, and not, as would *then* have been the case, upon the appointed ruler. Now, as the apostle does not blame the attempting to do these things *without a ruler present*, or even suggest that, *of course*, disorder would be the consequence of such an attempt, he justifies our doing likewise, if the disorder be avoided*.

Q. 30. What! the body able to do without one set apart for the office of ruler! how could they be edified?

A. You seem to overlook the presence of the Holy Ghost among the Saints, the priestly character of the whole body of them, and such exhortations as these (Heb. x. 21-25). "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, *but exhorting one another*, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Eph. iv. 16) "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which *every joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the *edifying of itself* in love." "Ye may all prophesy one by one. If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all." (See also Rom. xii. 3. 9; xv. 14; 1 Cor. i. 4, 5; xii. xiii. xiv. &c).

Q. 31. Is not the common plan much more orderly? See how orderly every thing goes on; whether the body is edified or not, and whether the Ruler is what he should be or not, still outward order is preserved.

A. On this principle, the order of machinery is preferable to that of life; and an automaton machine better

* Note.—Why do Saints now so generally repudiate the idea of the Lord's Supper being observed without the presence of some appointed ruler, set apart by ordination.

than a living man, because its functions are not so likely to be deranged. But in fact, there is *nothing* to God's mind such offensive disorder, as an order in the flesh, which enables that, which He meant to go on well only so long as it retained the Spirit, to retain *the appearance of going on well* when it has lost the life of the Spirit. Besides, the common plan is based upon Sectarianism. None who practise it meet upon the simple principle of "unity in the Spirit," and "the interests of the church risen in Jesus," or they would not venture to establish an order which limits the Holy Spirit to one given channel of edification—so that He must edify through the appointed ruler or not at all.

Q. 32. But how could order be kept? would not every thing be confusion, each person wanting to speak and none to guide the instruction?

A. I never heard any one make such excuses for refusing to go into society for the sake of *social* intercourse. If you asked me to dine and spend an evening at your house, and I refused, assigning as the reason:—"there will be no formally appointed keeper of order to guide the conversation, consequently there will be nothing but fighting as to who is to speak, and the dinner-table will be a scene of brawling and confusion: if you had asked me to hear a lecture on philosophy I should have ventured to come, but really to attend a *conversazione*, "or a common party, seems to me dangerous;"—would you not feel that I must have lived in strange society to entertain such fears? and perhaps not feel pleased at my estimate of the strength of good and gentlemanly feeling among your friends. Now God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints (1 Cor. xiv. 33), and His Spirit is much more powerful to keep order than is the poor restraint of etiquette among men. A little sound judgment would soon discover who were the possessors of gifts of edification: and if real love prevailed, humility would soon teach those who had no gifts to be silent. As I never found such difficulties at a gentleman's table or in civilized society, I do not see why I am to dread them at the Lord's table

or in the communion of saints, where the principles, order and restraints, are of so much higher a character—and the Lord Himself present both to keep order and to edify those present.

Q. 33. Must not a long time elapse ere you can hope to find enough to attempt this?

A. Two or THREE is the number. Two is enough, *three* MORE than requisite, a host itself would not do better. I am ready, that's one. For a second, on first coming alone to a place, I have indeed to wait upon the Lord. But since my desire to do this, is not with a view to please myself but to obey God, I should expect He would raise up some *one*, in order to enable me to obey Him. Moreover, the Holy Ghost honours His own Word; and He has all power in the hearts and minds of believers, so that, as the Word is *very* plain upon this point, I must surely believe, if stated to brethren, it will be recognized by them.

Q. 34. But we are too weak for so responsible and arduous a task.

A. What! too weak to assemble, two or three, in a private room and there eat a piece of bread, and drink a cup of wine among us in the Lord's name, and then part. If there were but two disciples, and they were both deaf and dumb, they could do that. This is all that is required of us—and it pre-supposes neither gifts nor moral qualification: all that is required is faith and the *spirit of obedience*, the want of which is, with most, the real difficulty. If this were done, Christ would meet with the two or three and edify their hearts and minds. And if they were not all deaf and dumb, the Spirit might, after a little, incline the hearts of one of them to repeat or read a few fragments of Scripture, or a hymn—or to pray:—it would be hard to find two Christians, neither of whom was gifted enough for *this* in such an assembly. And here would be means of edification most abundant; though the Holy Spirit is quite able to edify the soul, through faith, in the breaking of bread, and would do so abundantly were the other means wanting. The real deficiency, I believe, is, (i), want of Spiritual understanding of the

mind of God—(ii), of the spirit of obedience—and, iii), of humility.

Q. 35. Some have thought it dangerous to have the supper so often, lest it should become common in our eyes—and our feelings become deadened by the repetition.

A. And so they disobey God and obey their own thoughts, with a view of helping on the work of the Lord in their souls! and count disobedience and self-will *safer* than obedience and subjection to the written word. May the Lord forgive our foolishness and keep us from such spirituality!

Q. 36. Well, after all—it seems to me you advocate a theory which would never answer in practice.

A. It has of late been tried at various places and does answer, as all God's plans will to those who believe.

At Geneva, there are above 280 thus meeting in one place, with many similar gatherings throughout the surrounding country—at Coffrane, Neufchatel, Bôle, Dombressom and Val de Travers, there are similar meetings. About 42 can be counted in Switzerland. At Plymouth there are about 200 so meeting; there are similar gatherings at Tavistock, at Bath, in London, at Dublin, Limerick, Carhue, Tipperary, Westport, Cork, Mallow, &c. &c. &c.

In India also, the same theory is being carried into practice: in each of which, and in many other places, disciples are thus assembling. They have cast themselves upon the grace and energy of the Spirit, in subjection and obedience to what is written; hitherto they have certainly gone from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, realizing, in the midst of much weakness within, and foes without, what they knew not before of the strength and comfort of the communion of Saints and the Holy Catholic Church in their warfare with the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

But whether it answers according to man's thoughts or not, **WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN.**

* * * As to Pastors and Deacons, all I will at present say is, let us not be babes in understand-

ing like some (as though we were children playing at making churches), but let us remember that names are not things. Let us look for *the services and profit* of Pastorship and Deaconship, more than for men of straw to assume the name and usurp authority, instead of being Servants of the Church for Jesus' sake.

At Corinth the saints met without Pastors.—p. 5. —?

1st. September, 1837.

POSTSCRIPT.

The social* character of the Gospel of Christ is abundantly proved by the exhortation given (Heb. x. 25). Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another : this passage lays an imperative obligation upon *each* separate member of the Church of Christ ; and the meeting of *the body* as a whole (which in other places is spoken of) is thus provided for. Without such gathering of the body, as a whole, it is difficult indeed to conceive how the *world*, who take cognizance of outward things only, could, according to Jesus' prayer (John 17), see that we are all one as He and the Father are One. It contains also a pledge to us that God will give *the power of exhortation* to those who obey His commands and meet together, for it makes mutual edification a duty—I allude, to this as being a distinct duty, enforced by a distinct class of scriptures, from the Supper of the Lord :—Now in this Supper, as seems to me, we are presented with an epitome of all Christian doctrine,—

* This is proved at some length in a Tract entitled "*God's system of a Church*" wherein it is shown (i), that the modern church systems are wrong because they have assumed that no order or plan has been laid down by the Great Head of the Church, for the standing together of His Saints whilst looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Lord Jesus—for (ii), the Divine Wisdom has laid down (i), a certain *principle*, for the communion of the Saints, whilst on earth, viz :—The sovereignty of the Spirit in the mutual dependance of the members ; and (ii), this principle is found developed in practice, in a *system appointed* by God, for the churches ; the details of which system, are most minutely revealed as to the mode,—1st, of Edification ; 2ndly, of Government ; 3rdly, of Discipline.